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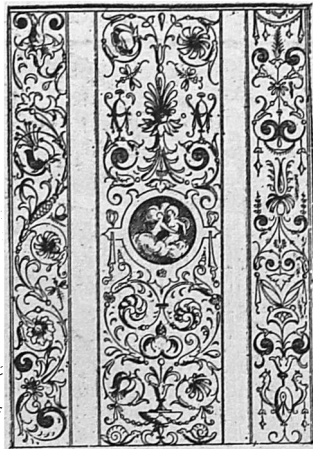
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### HOW ARTISTS REGARD IT.

THE views of representative American artists, respecting a matter that touches them so nearly as the decoration of places wherein men live, eat, sleep, worship, transact business, and make laws, can hardly be devoid of interest to those who regard beauty as among the things worth striving after. Among the painters recently asked to express an opinion respecting the growth of interest in decorating and furnishing, was Mr. T. W. Wood, Vice-President of the National Academy, and President of the Water Color Society, who may be taken as a type of the conservative. Said he: "I think that people have overdone this decoration business, they are becoming 'too-too' altogether. But, then, I wouldn't wish to be understood as decrying it. An artist could hardly do that, for it is a phase of what he himself is striving after in his pictures. Besides, it has drawn attention to art and awakened interest in it. In due bounds, of course, it is to be commended earnestly. The beautifying of one's own home—what is better than that? What do I think of establishing a class in decorative art in the Academy of Design? Well, to say the truth, I don't think well of it, altogether, because it seems to me that the purpose of the Academy is to give elementary training in art, while the making of ornamental patterns for carpets, paper, iron work, pottery, and so on more properly falls within the jurisdiction of a technological school. But, then, it would be well if decorative artists were to avail themselves of the advantages of the Academy of Design, for there we aim to make draughtsmen, and drawing is the foundation of all the arts. The training is severe, we draw from models that exhibit the pure Greek line, and we strive after accuracy as the very first essential. The danger of first studying decorative models and patterns is, that in striving after the freedom that is one of the especial charms of decorative art, the pupil is apt to make departures from strict accuracy. He should, therefore, learn to be strong and true before he can be free and graceful; his fancy, too, would be chastened and disciplined by familiarity with the Greek models. It must not be supposed that in the academy we compel the pupils to copy any particular style or to draw in any particular manner that would hamper them in learning a more decorative style subsequently. Yes, a painter's legitimate field is the making of pictures, but of course he is entitled to go in for decorative art if he wishes to. His knowledge, his ability in grouping and arrangement, his eye for color, are sure to affect for the better whatever he undertakes of a decorative character. On some accounts it would be well if all decoration, domestic or otherwise, were planned by artists: then we would not find pictures subordinated to bric-a-brac and furniture, and we would not find homes where people actually allow decoration to interfere with their individual comforts. There's a good deal of affectation, I tell you; in some houses, but the idea of home decoration is, fundamentally, one of the best that ever took a hold on the American people. Think what it does toward improving the taste of people in daily contact with it. Think what it does for children brought up amidst it. O, yes. When they don't carry it to extremes it's an excellent thing."

Lockwood De Forest was found in his Aladdin's cave of Oriental treasures, that is subjected to the uses of a studio, and was asked to state his views. It was doubtless because the interview had been preceded by conversation relative to the Oriental curios and the rich and brilliant scheme of decoration that has been carried out in his apartments, that he began by saying, "I think the tendency in decoration is toward the use of eastern things. They are the newest features in decoration and are the least likely to be run into the ground, because they cannot be made to order by persons ignorant of applied art. Moreover,

they are feasible for almost any kind of interior beautifying, and can be engrafted upon other styles. In much of the decorative work of to-day there is too strong a tendency toward the grotesque, which grows bad and tends to become worse. Some workmen in this particular line strive to amend for their want of elementary knowledge by showy and striking effects, and they are always straining after them. You enter a room—the first view gives you a surprise, but when you come to examine the causes of your surprise you find that they consist in loud color or in tricky and sensational effects. The first impression does not last long, and is succeeded by an unpleasant discovery that it is due to bad art. This is the danger of all work that is not properly trained and directed. Then there's a tendency toward copying in an indiscriminate fashion. For instance, a decorator will come to me with a drawing for a kitchen dresser, which is excellent when it is put to the use that it was intended for, but he wants to put the dresser into the parlor where it will be cumbersome and out of keeping. Of course only ignorant people do things like that. In art everything should be adapted to the place where it is to be put, and in that adaptation the artist has an advantage over an ordinary decorator; he understands tones and values and composition so much better. The present decorative tendency is a good one, and, I believe, is going to stimulate art, for art, though it is not a business, needs the support of money. The more that is spent on things really good the better for the art of the country. Criticism and admiration alone will not do; the artist must see the result of his labors in actual cash. If an artist is always thinking about his bread and butter he cannot do his best work. It's only of recent years that our interiors have been treated as works of art at all. Too often, even now, they are put in the hands of mechanics, and poor mechanics at that. The artist and expert should work together and should examine each other's plans before entering upon any important work. Many failures result from a lack of such coöperation. A great deal of our cabinet work is inartistic—mere copying. The danger that threatens Oriental work is not alone that it will be badly copied by our decorators, but that the people of India, in their respect for whatever is European, will strive to imitate our art, with a resulting loss of freshness and character in their own. We have more to learn of them than they of us. Some excellent work is being done in this country, and Americans have succeeded almost better than any others in assimilating styles in their decorative work providing that those styles are not grossly antagonistic."

Edwin H. Blashfield, an artist who has of late developed much power in decorative painting, and whose work includes many figures treated after the manner of the best decorative painters of Europe, is alive to the importance of applied art, and realizes its great possibilities in this country. Said he: "I think that thus far, the tendency among those who have to do with the ornamentation of our homes has been to make decoration too much a thing apart from the fancy of the decorator. We should require absolute harmony between decorator and architect, and the decorator must also consider carefully the laws that govern fitness in beauty. What is admirable for one room or place is unfit for another. Like types of architecture, styles of decoration have their outgrowth in the disposition and temperament of a people, and whatever is apart from or foreign to such disposition or temperament is manifestly misplaced. Then a man must consider his lighting, his material, the restrictions of place and size, and he must have an eye for harmony that all his work may hang together. It is a different effect that he aims at from that of a picture gallery where each painter's intention is to get the better of his neighbors and make his picture assert itself. If the decorator were to attempt a picture gallery effect, his work would be full of incongruities, his scheme would fall, and he with it. If we study the work of handicraftsmen in all periods of the history of art, we are forced to arrive at the conclusion that the essence of decoration lies in conformity to natural laws. The Greeks produced a glaze by drying and baking their ware in the sun, that glaze was a natural product. But in the north, where the sun is less warm and constant, the conditions were changed and artificial means were resorted to for the purpose of securing a glaze on earthenware. The discoveries made during the search for such a means resulted in the manufacture of stained glass, and you may say that stained glass was almost as natu-

ral an outcome of northern conditions as Greek work was of southern. The great need in our American decoration is a knowledge of life-size art. In this country there is no demand for things on a big scale—I mean things destined for the home. We live in small houses, occupy small rooms, and, of course, we must have small pictures and fittings and furnishings in keeping with the size of our apartments. We have no decoration, worthy to be called so, of our public halls and buildings. But on the other side the taste is higher and the demand for pictures wider. Students in Paris, Vienna, Berlin, and Rome are taught almost from the outset to handle the life size figure, and they gain a knowledge and freedom that is especially useful to them in painting large decorations. Only when our painters can handle life-size figures will we be abreast of foreign nations. There is an immense capacity in this country and it is showing itself too. It will show itself more rapidly when the full importance of decoration is understood, and when art is more generally diffused among the country's industries. The artist has worked in all times, but where you find art among handicraftsmen there you find a great art epoch. At such times artist and mechanic work together, and when you find Michael Angelo, the artist, making box covers, you will find Benvenuto Cellini, the goldsmith, forging colossal bronzes. The good workman should be something of an artist, and it is to an artist no indignity to say that he is a good workman. Hubert Herkomer is an excellent wood-carver, and when he was here he also showed me some beautiful silver spoons that he had been making with handles wrought into the form of nude figures. Fortuny used to dabble in that kind of work. He could damascene a sword blade exquisitely. The people—speaking of the laity—should inform themselves more perfectly on art and its laws. You make a good design perhaps, but when you go to put it into execution you come bump! against the wealthy man whose house you are to decorate, and who wants things this way when you know they should be done that way. If you obey him you falsify the relations of things, and the room is a failure. Sometimes he shifts the responsibility and says, 'I don't pretend to know anything about these things, but my wife says so-and-so and you'd better follow her plan.' But as men live they learn, and one can see that things are coming out well in this country."

HUNG TAPESTRIES.—It is always gratifying to us to find artistic suggestions of value that have appeared in our columns boldly carried out. A noted up-town club at a late meeting substituted old Gobelins tapestry as a screen for its music balcony in place of the monotonous ferns and smilax which usually serve the purpose. Every one present was pleased and many remarked on the beauty of the decoration. A daily contemporary referring to the tapestry thus displayed, observes: "It warmed up the old ball-room, and gave it a cosy, home-like look which reacted on the dancers and inspired them with a little of the 'hop, skip and jump' of former days." Particularly in southern Europe the hanging of rich, needle-worked and woven stuffs on balconies is largely practiced for picturesque effect, and tapestries might with us be similarly put to good account instead of being confined to hanging on walls or being used as window curtains and portières. The carefully studied arrangement of hues in ancient tapestry and the proportions these assume specially fit them for the purpose, and ordinarily they appear to best advantage in the distance and at an elevation; the high lights, which in old tapestries are often found worked in silver thread, better disclosing themselves. In ancient cathedrals and abbey churches abroad, the visitor is often charmed by rich tapestries suspended between chiseled columns having fantastic figures which grin from corbels as well as before the shrines of gilded statues of the saints, besides alternating with pictures on the walls. In Venice, Padua, Florence and elsewhere, external architecture is enhanced by the rich stuffs thrown on fête days over the carved stone balconies. Imitation tapestries are now so admirably executed that they may even be made to serve the purpose of novel and attractive decoration for the balconies and galleries of interiors devoted to the pleasures of music and the dance.

